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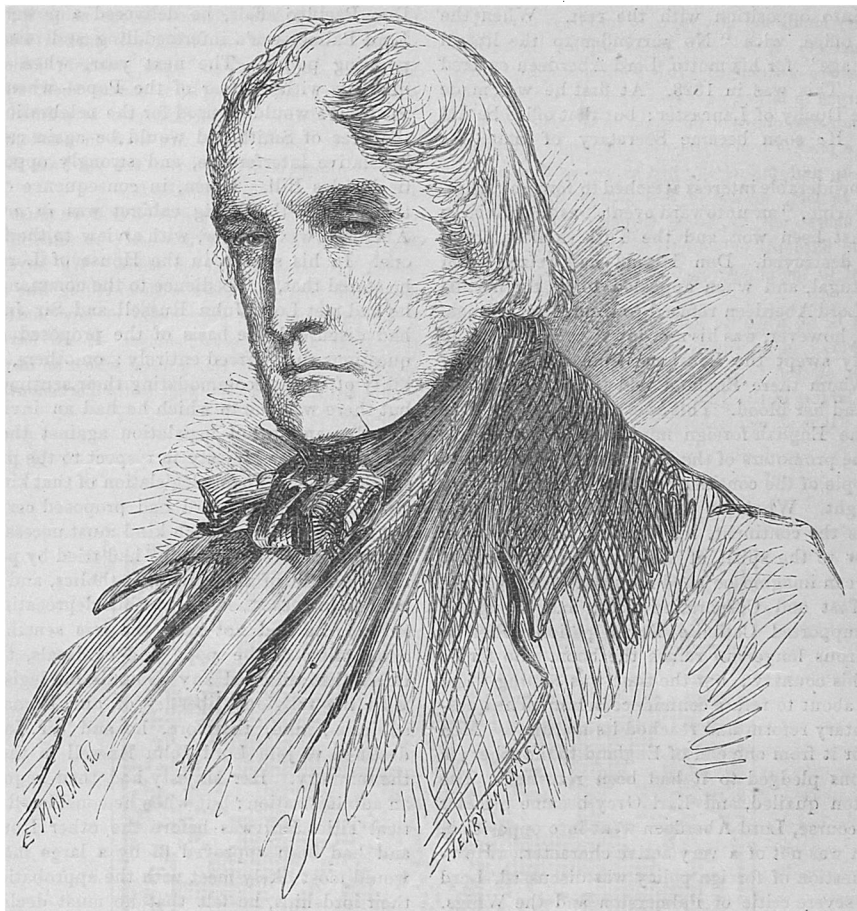
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## LORD ABERDEEN.

STATESMANSHIP and longevity seem quite compatible—at any rate, they are so in Lord Aberdeen's case. He was born in Edinburgh in 1784, educated at Harrow and at St. John's College, Cambridge, where, in 1804, he took the degree of M.A. But before then, his lordship had tasted the pleasures of foreign travel. Having succeeded to the title by the death of his father while yet a minor, the young earl, in 1801, proceeded on a tour through the classic lands of Greece. That he drank deeply of the inspiration by which he was surrounded is clear from the fact, that when he returned, he founded the Athenian Society, the fundamental condition of which was, that no one should be a member who had not visited Greece. His lordship did more than this, he wrote a review in the *Edinburgh* of "Gell's Topography of Troy," creditable alike

sixteen representative peers which Scotland, by the Articles of Union, is entitled to send to Parliament. This honour he held till, in 1814, he was called to the British peerage by the title of Viscount Gordon.

Lord Aberdeen's *début* in public life was not a very brilliant one. For five years he was a silent supporter of Mr. Percival. It was not till 1811 that he ventured to address their lordships, when he made his maiden-speech, by moving the address in the House of Lords, in answer to the Prince Regent's speech. Two years after we find him engaged in diplomacy. England was then at war with France. It was desirable, if possible, to get Austria on her side. This was a task of some difficulty, and Aberdeen was sent to Vienna to negotiate; for a long time Austria hesitated, but at length the councils of



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to his learning, to his power of observation, and his taste. This was enough for Byron, who was preparing to avenge himself, in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," for the wrong he had received from the *Edinburgh Review*, and was doubly delighted thus to have a chance of gibbeting a rival author and a brother peer. Accordingly in his burning satire we read:—

"First in the oat-fed phalanx shall be seen  
The travelled Thane, Athenian Aberdeen!"

Aberdeen, however, did not take much harm from the ill-natured couplet, for in 1806 we find him elected as one of the

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Aberdeen and Metternich prevailed. The former remained with the Austrian emperor till the conclusion of the war, and accompanied the advance of the Austrian army to Paris, where he signed the Treaty of Peace on behalf of England, on the first of June, 1814. Nor was this the only negotiation in which he was engaged. It was thought that Murat, whom Napoleon had seated on the throne of Naples, could be weaned from the man to whom he owed so much. Aberdeen was employed to detach him, and succeeded. We have already mentioned the diplomatist's reward—he was made a peer of the realm.

Peace accomplished, his lordship retired from the stage. For this absence from public life two reasons may be assigned—

his retiring disposition and his attachment to domestic society. Soon after he became of age he married the daughter of the first Marquis of Abercorn. That lady died in 1812. It may be, that to dissipate his grief and to obtain change of scene he entered upon public life. In 1815 he again became a married man, the object of his choice, this time, being the widow of Viscount Hamilton, and mother of the present Marquis of Abercorn; and possibly he may have preferred the language of the domestic hearth to the applause of listening senates. It was quite as well that his lordship thought so. Liberal principles were abroad, and his lordship was not prepared to support them. The English people demanded—justly and respectfully demanded—reform, but his lordship was not prepared to grant it. An accursed alliance—blasphemously calling itself “holy”—had been established by Austria, Russia, and Prussia, for the purpose of keeping down their respective peoples by brute force, and it was understood that his lordship heartily supported it. Canning, as it was, had sufficient foes to contend against in that bitter struggle which ended in his death; and when Canning was deserted by the Tories, Aberdeen went into opposition with the rest. When the Iron Duke took office, with “No surrender to the liberal tendencies of the age” for his motto, Lord Aberdeen entered upon official life. This was in 1828. At first he was made Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; but that office he did not hold long. He soon became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

At that time considerable interest attached to foreign affairs. The battle of Navarino, “an untoward event,” as the ministry termed it, had just been won, and the Turkish fleet, for a time, completely destroyed. Don Miguel had seized upon the throne of Portugal, and when appealed to by the friends of Donna Maria, Lord Aberdeen refused to avenge her wrongs. More to his credit, however, was his non-interference, when the three days of July swept the Bourbons from the throne of France to place whom there England had so lavishly poured out her treasure and her blood. This was right enough. But it was felt that the English foreign minister was too closely connected with the promoters of the Holy Alliance to sympathise with the people of the continent in their onward struggle for right and might. Whatever might have been his prejudices as regards the continent, his lordship, however, was compelled to bow to the spirit of the age at home. As a Presbyterian, we can imagine he shed no bitter tears over the abolition of the Test and Corporation acts; and though a Scotchman, he supported Catholic Emancipation, when it was found dangerous longer to refuse the boon. So far he deserved well of his country; but the time was coming when that country was about to refuse confidence in him. The question of Parliamentary reform had reached its maturity. Men were clamorous for it from one end of England to the other; a House of Commons pledged to it had been returned. The Duke of Wellington quailed, and Earl Grey became premier in his stead; of course, Lord Aberdeen went into opposition, but his opposition was not of a very active character. However, when the question of foreign policy was discussed, Lord Aberdeen was a severe critic of Palmerston and the Whigs. It is not clear that his lordship was altogether wrong. It is not clear that the non-interference in the affairs of other states, for which he contended, was not the proper course to pursue. It is not clear that Palmerstonian policy always shines when contrasted with his own. These matters, however, must be reserved for graver pages than ours.

In the meanwhile Lord Aberdeen had again resumed official life. In 1841 a vote of want of confidence in the Whigs—the Whigs never seem to have confidence reposed in them—was carried by a majority of about ninety. Sir Robert Peel came into office, and Lord Aberdeen again became foreign minister. The result was a good understanding with France, with which country we had been on the eve of war, and the memorable visit to Eu, where Louis Philippe bestowed upon our foreign minister the flattering epithet of “*Ce bon Aberdeen*”—a phrase afterwards applied in irony to its object, when it became manifest that the wily old monarch, in marry-

ing his son to the sister of the Queen of Spain, had overreached the English cabinet. While Lord Aberdeen was in office, i.e. was also successful in bringing the Chinese war to a close, though he had disapproved of the steps which had led to the rupture. Another question, more important, was the definition of the boundary line between the British possessions in North America and our own States, both on the north-east and the north-west. To settle the first, Lord Ashburton—better known as Alexander Baring, of the house of Baring and Co.—was despatched to our government, with full power to conclude a treaty, by which it is to be hoped this question has been set at rest for ever. The north-west boundary, or Oregon question, was settled in an equally satisfactory manner. After some discussion, a treaty fairly providing for the rights of all parties was happily negotiated, the ratification of which arrived in this country in 1846, just as Sir Robert Peel's ministry were quitting office.

From 1846 to 1853 we seldom read his name in the entertaining columns of Hansard. Lord Aberdeen rarely spoke except when foreign affairs were debated. In 1850, on the Don Pacifico affair, he delivered a powerful speech against Lord Palmerston's intermeddling and mischievous and exasperating policy. The next year, when all England grew delirious with the fear of the Pope—when old ladies thought St. Paul's would be used for the celebration of the mass, and the fires of Smithfield would be again relit—he objected to legislative interference, and strongly opposed the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. When, in consequence of their conduct in this matter, the Whig cabinet was *in articulo mortis*, Lord Aberdeen was sent for, with a view to the formation of a new one. In his speech in the House of Lords, February 28th, he stated that, in obedience to the commands of her Majesty, he had met Lord John Russell and Sir James Graham, and had discussed the basis of the proposed cabinet. On some questions they agreed entirely; on others, there was a probability of their accommodating their sentiments to each other; but there was one to which he had an invincible repugnance, namely, any penal legislation against the Roman Catholic subjects of her Majesty in respect to the prohibition of ecclesiastical titles. To any legislation of that kind he was opposed. No doubt the noble lord had proposed certain modifications; but all legislation of such kind must necessarily be inefficient. For two hundred years they had tried by persecution to limit the numbers of the Roman Catholics, and the only effect had been to increase them. But while deprecating legislation on the subject, he had not been the less sensible of the arrogant assumption of the pope and cardinals, though he did not think that afforded any grounds for legislative interference with the religious liberties of our Roman Catholic fellow subjects; and, therefore, he and Sir James Graham had declined to join Lord John Russell in the reconstruction of the ministry. Her Majesty had then requested him to form an administration; but when he considered that the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was before the other House of Parliament, and had been approved of by a large majority, and that it would most likely meet with the approbation of a majority of their lordships, he felt that he must decline the task which her Majesty had been graciously pleased to impose on him, but to which he had never felt himself equal. Perhaps his lordship felt that the pear was not ripe, and that he could bide his time. At any rate he was wise in doing so. Lord John soon went out of office. Lord Derby then came in, and after his administration was utterly broken up, Lord Aberdeen became the head of the new cabinet.

We may add here in conclusion, that Lord Aberdeen has never been unmindful of the claims of science and art. In 1812, he was elected president of the Society of Antiquaries, which office he resigned in 1846. In 1823, he appeared before the world as the author of a work on “*Grecian Architecture*,” in which he criticises Burke's theory of the association of ideas in his celebrated “*Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*.” As lords are but rarely authors or critics, this of itself is something in his favour, though Burke still retains possession of the place of honour.